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ABSTRACT

A study examined the interrelationships among the Listening Practices Feedback Report (LPFR) items to determine if an underlying theoretical construct of listening perceptions are measured by the LPFR. As part of LPFR listening training sessions, LPFR respondent and associate(s) scores were gathered from several major companies and organizations. Each subject completed Form I of the LPFR regarding their own listening behavior and then had six colleagues or associates fill out an LPFR on the listening behavior of the subject. A single randomly chosen associate's ratings, the associates' averaged ratings, and the respondent's self-ratings of all respondents were submitted to factor analysis. Results of the associates' ratings of respondents on the LPFR indicated that appropriateness, professionalism, and supportiveness in perceived listening were all factors that were positively correlated with one another. Results of self-ratings on the LPFR indicated that six factors emerged: (1) appropriate listening behavior; (2) being thoughtful and not responding in an emotional manner; (3) remembering accurately when recalling information; (4) being empathic and supportive by listening sincerely; (5) appropriately responding as listener speaking to other by paraphrasing or asking the other to speak louder; and (6) listening in a businesslike, professional manner. Findings suggest that the multidimensionality of the listening process is perceived as more complex when individuals consider their own listening as compared to considering the listening of others. (Four tables of data are included.) (RS)

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An Examination of the Dimensional Structure of the Listening Practices Feedback Report

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An Examination of the Dimensional Structure of the Listening Practices Feedback Report

Perceived listening ability can be assessed in several ways: direct measures of listening ability, measurement of listener's behavior such as body movement, and by asking individuals to assess their perceptions of their own and others' listening behavior. The concern of many, if not most, studies in listening has been with listening effectiveness as distinct from perceived listening effectiveness. The focus of the present study is perceived listening ability.

Multidimensionality of the listening construct has been demonstrated on many measures. The multidimensionality of listening has been demonstrated on four direct tests of listening ability (Fitch Hauser & Hughes, 1987). These listening tests had as their objective the measurement of listening ability through administration of tests not unlike the tests used to test other cognitive areas such as math, history, chemistry, and the like.

Another legitimate concern of listening scholars is the ability people are perceived to have as listeners. The extent to which we are perceived as effective listeners should have an effect on our perceived credibility and our subsequent effectiveness as speakers, managers, teachers, counselors, lawyers, and any other professions that are significantly based on the listening skills of the professional. Further, knowledge of others' perceptions of our listening abilities should provide

insight into our own listening behavior so that we can improve it when necessary.

Since others' evaluation of a person's listening ability is a perception it would stand to reason that measures of these perceptions might share characteristics with other measured perceptions. Other perceived communication variables that have been studied empirically include source credibility, attitudes, and attraction. Each of these consistently has been shown to be multidimensional in nature (McCroskey and Young, 1981; Emmert and McDermott, 1976; McCroskey, 1974) . This may suggest the existence of a tendency of people to perceive qualities of others in terms of components, or factors, relative to each variable of concern.

Husband, Cooper and Monsour (1988) found seven first-order factors underlying supervisors' perceptions of their own listening behavior: attending, clarifying, responding, discriminating and evaluating, recalling, affiliating and accommodating. In addition they discovered two second-order factors underlying the original seven: listening to gain information accurately and listening to create a supportive interpersonal environment.

Norton and Pettegrew (1979) found four factors underlying their construct of attentiveness: inactivity which is negatively related to the attentiveness construct, attentiveness signals, attentiveness sensitivities, and an evaluation factor related to attentiveness self-image.

The Listening Practices Feedback Report, LPFR, developed by Brandt and Brandt (Brandt, Brandt, Emmert and Emmert, 1992) is a self-report and other-report instrument which has been used in over 100 organization with thousands of individuals to examine the individual's perception of their own listening behavior and the perception of their colleagues and associates of these same individuals' listening behaviors. The LPFR attempts to address the multidimensionality of the listening perception construct in the LPFR Training Instrument which is used to deliver feedback to respondents during the training sessions.

Presently, the procedure in training sessions is to use the percentiles associated with scores on the LPFR, to group the percentiles from the items into three categories called major, intermediate and minor, based on the frequency of the mention of the items by subjects used to derive the items in the original development of the LPFR. These percentiles then are averaged for each category are then the categories are weighted to create an individual's Listening Practices Quotient (LPQ). The major category accounts for 60% of the LPFQ, the intermediate category 30% and the minor category 10% of the total LPFQ. This results in each of the items in the major category accounting for 15% of the LPFQ, the intermediate items each count for 1.9%, and the minor items each count for 1.25%. The assumption has been that the more frequently mentioned items in the original study represent the central or important core concept of listening for this population since they are mentioned most.

This assumption is examined in the present study. Factor analysis is used to study the interrelationships among the LPFR items to determine if an underlying theoretical construct, or a set of constructs, or "dimensions," of listening perceptions are measured by the LPFR.

METHOD

As part of LPFR listening training sessions LPFR respondent and associate(s) scores were gathered from several major companies and organizations, including a major volunteer association, a bank, a hospital, an instructional design group and a general management group from several different organizations.

Before the training sessions each respondent was asked to fill out Form I of the LPFR regarding their own listening behavior and to give a separate copy of Form II to six associates/colleagues to fill out regarding the listening behavior of the respondent. The associates' forms were averaged to produce some of the feedback given to respondents on the LPFR Training Instrument during the subsequent training sessions.

A single randomly chosen associate's ratings, the associates' averaged ratings and the respondent's self ratings of all respondents were submitted to varimax factor analysis. Individual LPFR items were chosen to represent a factor if they loaded .5 or greater on that factor and no more than .3 on any

other factor, if they loaded .6 or greater on that factor and no more than .4 on any other factor.

Typically results are not reported for factors which have fewer than 2 items which meet these criteria nor are the factor loadings reported for items which do not meet the criteria for loading on a single factor, for being a "pure" representative of that factor. These single item factors and multiple loading items were discarded or changed during instrument construction and dropped from further analyses.

An alternative solution to single item factors is to try to develop a greater number of items to measure an individual item factor during subsequent instrument constructions. In addition, much information concerning the nature of the meaning of individual items is lost when meaningful (loadings of .3 or more) but less than pure (alternative loadings of .3 or more) are not given for multiple loading items. An item that loads on more than one factor contains within that item "meaning" associated with all the factors it loads on. It is helpful in interpreting an item to know on which factors it loads. In addition, these meaningful but not "pure" items offer nuances of interpretation for the factors derived solely from "pure" items. Since this study is concerned with both the nature of the LPFR and the nuances of the multidimensionality of the listening perception construct, complete results for all the derived factors are reported.

RESULTS

The groups were not significantly different from one another on the mean of respondents' scores on the LPFR (mean=108, F=.88, p=.48), the mean of combined associates' scores (mean=111, F=.81, p=.52), the mean number of associates' responses which were averaged in the combined associates scores (mean=5.3 ,F=.31, p=.87) or the mean of a single randomly chosen individual rater for each respondent (mean=112, F=1.55, p=.19). This permitted the combination of data from the organizations for the purpose of factor analysis.

Table 1 presents the results from the varimax factor analysis of the average of the associates' ratings (ranged from 3 to 6 associates with a mean of 5.3 associates) for each respondent. Four factors were produced which accounted for 63% of the variance (see Table 3.) The fourth factor was single item factor and will not be discussed. The starred items represent those participant practices which were used to identify the dimensions of listening perception.

The first dimension appeared to be an "appropriateness" dimension, one in which the listener is perceived as engaging in appropriate listening behaviors and/or avoiding inappropriate behaviors. The second dimension appeared to be a "professionalism" dimension, focusing on note-taking questioning, and efficiency. The third dimension appeared to be a "supportiveness" dimension, with emphasis on nonverbal feedback, sincerity, and attempts at clarification.

TABLE 1

Factor Analysis for Associate Average Ratings on the LPFR

LPFR Items	Factor Loadings			
	1	2	3	4
5-maintain proper balance, not talking more than listening	.839*	.057	.021	.026
15-avoids becoming emotional/ defensive when difficult situation is encountered	.722*	.299	.170	.143
21-permits speaker to continue without interruptions	.829*	.075	.037	.017
10-permits a proper topic closure/agreement before changing topic	.757*	.315	.034	.119
26-responds in an unemotional manner/ avoids (trigger) words/ phrases/cliches which cause people to "tune-out/turn-off"	.712*	.290	.050	.272
1-take time, have patience, when listening	.670*	.299	.338	-.070
14-listen with an open mind, free from personal bias	.736*	.328	.294	.083
27-considers content/logic, not critical of speaker's delivery, appearance, grammar, vocabulary, etc.	.635*	-.232	-.015	.315
2-listen to someone regard to official status or position	.586	.327	.362	-.024
3-give the speaker full attention, not preoccupied with other concerns	.521	.433	.390	-.0001
8-keep a confidence	.559	.411	.175	.003
25-places himself/herself in others' position, understands other's concern and feelings	.529	.495	.374	-.229
7-prepares/becomes informed when such is necessary	.268	.829*	.131	.053
12-follow-up with prompt, correct action on points agreed to	.191	.801*	.031	-.096

TABLE 1 (cont.)

LPFR Items	Factor Loadings			
	1	2	3	4
9-take notes when appropriate	.121	.732*	.166	.146
6-ask relevant questions for clarification on points that are technical/misunderstood	.150	.649*	.313	.171
22-prohibits/hold to a minimum, outside distractions when in a discussion or meeting, (phone calls or staff)	.037	.588*	.267	-.067
23-responds/paraphrases comments to ensure understanding	.210	.557*	.306	.124
19-accurately relates messages to third party	.426	.604	.327	-.183
11-accurately recall comments/ position at a later time	.405	.682	.170	-.237
18-correctly anticipates where the discussion is going	.234	.623	.434	-.131
17-smiles/acknowledges a clever remark	.209	.160	.729*	-.290
16-listen with sincerity not false/go-through-the-motions attitude	.356	.264	.692*	.064
28-ask the speaker to speak louder/clearer when situation calls for it	-.203	.161	.642*	.219
13-encourages others to give views on the subject/topic under discussion	.481	.200	.539	-.176
20-maintains appropriate degree of eye contact when speaking/listening	.071	.493	.497	.088
4-give appropriate non-verbal signals indicating attention	.088	.427	.600	-.057
24-thinks about the subject under discussion before responding	.208	.039	-.027	.788*

TABLE 1 (cont.)

Factor Names	Eigenvalue	% Variance Accounted For
1 appropriateness	11.89	42.4
2 professionalism	3.10	53.5
3 supportiveness	1.4	58.6

The factors associated with the average of associates' ratings on the LPFR were correlated with one another. (see Table 2)

TABLE 2

Intercorrelations Among Averages of Associates' LPFR Factors

Factor	2	3	4
1 Appropriateness	.46**	.31**	.25**
2 Professionalism		.52**	.07
3 Supportiveness			.00

N of cases = 123 1-tailed significance *-.01 ** -.001

Appropriateness, professionalism and supportiveness in perceived listening are all positively correlated with one another. The fourth single item factor failed to correlate with any other factors.

A varimax factor analysis of the 28 self-report LPFR items produced 10 factors which accounted for 66% of the variance (see Table 5). Four factors, 7,8,9, and 10 were single item factors and are listed at the bottom of the table. The starred items represent those participant practices which were used to identify that particular dimension of listening.

TABLE 3

Factor Analysis for Respondent's Self-Rating on the LPFR

LPFR Items	Factor Loadings					
	1	2	3	4	5	6 F
10-permits a proper topic closure/agreement before changing topic	.698*	.205	.002	-.002	.024	.156
3-give the speaker full attention, not preoccupied with other concerns	.722*	.130	.160	.303	.088	.118
20-maintains appropriate degree of eye contact when speaking/listening	.610*	-.080	.153	.096	.226	.106
1-take time, have patience, when listening	.524	.164	.115	.321	.048	-.023
12-follow-up with prompt, correct action on points agreed to	.522	-.015	.180	-.116	.082	.307
4-give appropriate non-verbal signals indicating attention	.431	.014	.244	.358	.364	.002
15-avoids becoming emotional/ defensive when difficult situation is encountered	.134	.756*	.061	-.037	.132	.055
24-thinks about the subject under discussion before responding	-.023	.699	.126	-.101	.013	-.015*
26-responds in an unemotional manner/ avoids (trigger) words/ phrases/cliches which cause people to "tune-out/turn-off"	.259	.555*	.068	.248	-.018	.032
21-permits speaker to continue without interruptions	.187	.508	-.365	.377	-.039	.068
19-accurately relates messages to third party	.303	.076	.748*	-.006	-.053	.061
11-accurately recall comments/ position at a later time	.111	.271	.603*	.211	.179	-.003
18-correctly anticipates where the discussion is going	.083	-.097	.637*	.122	.278	.206
25-places himself/herself in others position, understands other's concern and feelings	.016	-.052	.026	.762*	-.028	.144

TABLE 3 (cont.)

LPFR Items	Factor Loadings					
	1	2	3	4	5	6 F
16-listen with sincerity not false/go-through-the-motions attitude	.238	.026	.092	.433*	.163	.098
27-considers content/logic, not critical of speaker's delivery, appearance, grammar, vocabulary, etc.	.057	.130	.213	.451	-.136	.009
5-maintain proper balance, not talking more than listening	.294	.360	-.315	.380	-.053	-.109
14-listen with an open mind, free from personal bias	.087	.314	.067	.436	-.158	.052
23-responds/paraphrases comments to ensure understanding	.138	.146	.043	-.030	.823*	.104
28-ask the speaker to speak louder/clearer when situation calls for it	.171	-.233	.020	.050	.590*	.333
6-ask relevant questions for clarification on points that are technical/misunderstood	-.196	.182	.394	-.143	.552	-.026
17-smiles/acknowledges a clever remark	.115	-.161	.236	.238	.367	.252
9-take notes when appropriate	.061	-.064	-.096	.202	.138	.788*
7-prepares/becomes informed when such is necessary	.067	.156	.300	.010	.040	.762*

Table 3 (cont.)

One Item Factors:

	Factor Loadings	LPFR Items	Additional Loadings		
				LPFR Item	*
Factor 7	.786*	8-keep a confidence		11	.330
				27	.443
				28	.333
Factor 8	.816	22-prohibits/hold to a minimum, outside distractions when in a discussion or meeting, (phone calls or staff)		17	.370
				5	.479
Factor 9	.808*	2-listen to someone without regard to official status or position	1	1	.384
Factor 10	.754*	13-encourages others to give views on subject/ topic under discussion	1	12	.438

Factor Names	Eigenvalue	% Variance Accounted For
1 appropriateness	19.1	19.1
2 emotional avoidance	9.1	28.2
3 memory/recall	6.3	34.5
4 empathic nonjudgmental attitude	5.6	40.0
5 listener speaking	5.2	45.3
6 business/professional listening	4.5	49.8
7 trustworthy	4.3	54.0
8 privacy	3.9	58.0
9 egalitarian listening	3.9	61.9
10 encourages listener response	3.6	65.5

The factors associated with the respondents' own ratings on the LPFR, including the ones represented by a single item, were correlated with one another. (see Table 4)

TABLE 4

Intercorrelations Among Self LPFR Factors

Factors	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Appropriateness	.27*	.36**	.27*	.27*	.21*	.15	.15	.11	.17
2 Emotional Avoidance		.24*	.12	.07	.09	.21*	.20	.20	.21*
3 Memory/Recall			.26*	.28**	.24*	.09	.20	.22*	.27*
4 Empathy				.14	.25*	.18	.16	.20	.17
5 Listener Speaking					.26*	.17	.19	-.02	.24*
6 Professional						.12	.16	.08	.14
7 Trustworthy							.04	.06	.20
8 Privacy								.02	.09
9 Egalitarian									.26*
10 Encourages Response									

N of cases = 123 1-tailed significance *-.01 **-.001

Appropriateness is positively correlated with avoiding emotional responses, later recall, empathic response, listener as speaker, and professional listening. A controlled emotional response is positively related to appropriateness, being trustworthy and encouraging speaker responses. Memory/recall is positively associated with appropriateness, controlling emotion, responding emphatically, listener as speaker, professional listening, egalitarian listening and encouraging speaker responses. Empathic listening is correlated with appropriateness, memory/recall, and professional listening. Listener as speaker is positively related to appropriateness, memory/recall, professional listening, and encouraging speaker responses. Professional listening is positively correlated with

appropriateness, memory/recall, empathic listening and encouraging speaker responses. Trustworthiness is correlated with avoiding emotional responses as a listener. Egalitarian listening is positively correlated with memory/recall and encouraging speaker responses. Encouraging speaker responses is positively related to avoiding emotional responses, memory recall, listener as speaker and egalitarian listening. Factor 8, providing privacy is not correlated with any of the other factors.

DISCUSSION

Associates' Ratings of Respondents on the LPFR

The central dimension or factor that accounts for most of the meaning underlying associates' responses on the LPFR is the perception that the listener has engaged in appropriate listening behaviors and is not performing those behaviors which may threaten the speaker's role: interrupting, changing the topic, becoming emotional or defensive, responding emotionally or hostilely and talking, not listening. Avoiding these behaviors indicates that the individual is taking time to listen with an open mind to what the speaker has to say.

A second listening construct underlying the LPFR is a business/professional dimension. The individual is prepared, takes notes, asks relevant questions, paraphrases the speaker to increase understanding, and follows-up with prompt action on agreed points. The emergence of the factor is not surprising since the LPFR was developed specifically to be used in a

managerial setting. It does emphasize the importance of using subjects to generate items as well as experts. The presence of this construct suggests that the listening context may also be important in understanding the multidimensional nature of listening (Emmert, 1990).

The third factor to emerge reflects the importance of listener supportiveness: smiling, acknowledging a clever remark, placing himself/herself in the other's position, understanding the other's concern and feelings.

These three factors clearly emerge, whether an individual associate's responses or an average of associates' responses is used in the analysis. They correlate significantly with one another and appear to represent the core of the LPFR measure. A fourth factor, represented by a single item emerges in both analyses, the appearance of thoughtful deliberation by the listener before responding. This item/factor does not correlate with the other factors and appears to represent an independent and underrepresented aspect of the listening perception construct as it measured by the LPFR.

Three single item/factors emerge in the individual associate analysis which are absorbed into the other factors in the average associates' analysis: nonverbal attentiveness, creating privacy without distraction, and listener speaking to other by paraphrasing or asking the other to speak louder. Nonverbal attentiveness and asking the other to speak louder are absorbed into the supportiveness factor. Holding distraction to a minimum and paraphrasing for understanding are absorbed by the

professional/businesslike factor. The clarity of the factor analysis results for the average associates' rankings suggest that the LPFR is particularly meaningful as a measure of associates' perceptions of the respondent's listening practices.

Self Ratings on the LPFR

Six factors meeting the minimum criteria of two items loading significantly on a factor emerged in the factor analysis of self-LPFR ratings. The first factor is similar to the associates' factor. It indicates that the listener has behaved appropriately: not changing the topic, giving the speaker full attention, and maintaining eye contact. This factor is significantly correlated with the other five factors and represents a central core dimension.

Being thoughtful and not responding in an emotional manner by becoming defensive emerges as the second factor. It correlates with remembering and recalling information which is consistent with the perception that responding emotionally reduces information reception.

Remembering accurately when recalling information and reporting it to others is the only other factor to correlate positively with all five other factors which emerged in the analysis.

The failure of three of the factors to relate to avoiding emotional responses and being defensive is also interesting. Being empathic and supportive by listening sincerely listening

and placing yourself in the other's position is positively related to four factors. It is not significantly associated with not responding emotionally or defensively.

Appropriately responding as a speaker who is listening by paraphrasing and asking others to speak louder correlates with three factors but not with avoiding emotional responses and being empathic. Listening in a businesslike professional manner was positively related to four factors but not to not responding emotionally or defensively. While listening scholars tend to teach avoiding emotional responses and defensiveness as a part of paraphrasing, achieving empathy, and responding professionally, listeners in this context apparently perceive these as independent practices.

The single item/factors appear relatively independent of the general listening construct in respondents' self-ratings, except for encouraging responses from the other, which correlates significantly with three of the six factors to emerge in this analysis.

Summary

The relatively greater number of factors which emerged on the self-ratings (6) compared to the average associates' ratings (3) suggests that the multidimensionality of the listening process is perceived as more complex when individuals consider their own listening as compared to considering the listening of others. Listening research may need to distinguish between the

process as perceived from the viewpoint of myself as listener and the other as listener when I am speaking. This finding supports the distinction between listening as a physiological process, at least theoretically the same for each individual, and the social aspects of listening which may vary by role (listener and listened to) and by context (business, interpersonal interaction). Further research should examine the relationship of self and associate ratings on the LPFR.

Although the business/professional dimension of listening did not load as many items on the self-ratings factor analysis, it clearly emerged in all three factor analyses. These results offer strong support for the use of the LPFR as a measure of the multidimensional construct of perceived listening ability in a managerial context.

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